

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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MOBSTERS, HOOFERS AND ASSORTED LOWLIFES TO REALLY SULLY OREGON BALLET THEATRE'S AMERICAN PROGRAM

Portland, Ore... **Oregon Ballet Theatre resumes its 2007-08 Grand Tour season April 18 – 27** with a tongue-in-cheek tribute to vaudeville and the enduring legacy of Broadway.

The program includes the OBT premiere of **George Balanchine's** raucous *Slaughter on 10th Avenue*, a madcap mélange of gangsters, hoofers and striptease girls. This distillation of all the best from the Broadway classic, *On Your Toes*, celebrates Balanchine's epic 1936 collaboration with Richard Rodgers, American musical theater's quintessential composer. It's a story of murder and mayhem, in which gunplay settles disputes, a hooper dances for his life (literally), and corpses only stay dead until they're needed for the final number.

OBT's dancers displayed their comedy chops once before in the 2006 production of Jerome Robbins' *The Concert*. This time around, they tackle speaking roles and absurdly dramatic death scenes – and are aided in the pandemonium by guest artist **Sean McGrath** of Oregon Public Broadcasting's witty and irreverent *Live Wire Radio*.

Rounding out the American program is the triumphant return of two ballets created in recent years expressly for OBT's dancers. **Kent Stowell's** lively *Through Eden's Gates*, performed to Seattle native William Bolcom's ragtime compositions for dual pianos, is a loving homage to vaudeville. And, in a dramatic counterpoint to the controlled frivolity of the rest of the program, **Trey McIntyre's** stunning *Just* storms back into the OBT repertoire three years after it first astonished audiences at its Keller Auditorium premiere.

Performances of the American program take place at the **Newmark Theatre**, SW Broadway at Main.

Evenings: April 18-19 and 24-26 at 7:30 p.m. / Matinees: April 19-20 and 26-27 at 2 p.m.

Tickets start at \$14, with special rates for groups and organizations.

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Online: www.obt.org / www.ticketmaster.com

By Phone: 503-2-BALLET (503-222-5538) or 888-9-BALLET (888-922-5538)

In Person: OBT Box Office, 818 SE Sixth Ave., M-F 9am-5pm / Ticketmaster Outlets

The 2007-08 season is sponsored by **American Airlines, Gerding Edlen Development** and **The Oregonian**. Season media support is provided by **kink fm102, KGW** and **Northwest Cable News**.

Audience enrichment events for the American program include **Dance Talks**, Monday, **April 14, 2007, 7 p.m., at the Newmark Theatre**. This **free** forum gives audiences a chance to hear directly from artists and critics who have significantly shaped the aesthetic, contemporary and historic evolution of ballet and the creative process. Moderated by Christopher Stowell, the 75-minute program makes extensive use of historical video footage and photography to assist audience members in contextualizing the work(s) under discussion. Introduced as part of Stowell's initial year as artistic director, The Dance Talks series is unique among Portland's artistic opportunities and was an instant success with the city's dance-going community. Nearly 500 patrons, dance lovers, students of dance and academics attended the forums in the first year.

Christopher Stowell is joined on this Dance Talks program by OBT dance historian **Linda Besant** and **OBT company dancers (TBD)**. They will discuss the symbiosis that developed in the first half of the 20th Century between ballet, vaudeville and musical theater, as well as the technical challenges peculiar to performing works from each of these genres.

Reservations are requested, as seating is limited. To reserve, send name and number of seats requested to: outreach@obt.org or phone 503.227.0977, ext.213.

In addition, **Performance Perspectives**, providing context for the entire program and led by **Linda Besant**, takes place in the orchestra level seating area of the Newmark Theater, **one hour prior to each performance**. Audience members are also invited to a **Question and Answer session with Christopher Stowell** and company dancers at the front of the auditorium immediately following the April 20, 24, 25 and 27 performances.

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Oregon Ballet Theatre's American Program

Through Eden's Gates (2007)

Music: William Bolcom – *The Serpent's Kiss; Fast, Furious; Rag Infernal; Nocturne; Graceful Ghost Rag; Paseo; Valse Venezolano; Haunted Labyrinth*

Choreography: Kent Stowell

Costume Design: Larae Theige Hascall

Lighting & Scenic Design: Randall G. Chiarelli

Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

Piano: Carol Rich & Susan Smith

Throughout his career, choreographer Kent Stowell has created ballets rooted in the lineage of American musical theater. He grew up in Utah during the 1940s, and says of his childhood, "There wasn't any ballet, but there were so many artists in the movies, like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and that's what excited me." *Through Eden's Gates*, tailor-made for OBT's dancers in 2007, continues this lifelong love affair.

In creating the work, Stowell was drawn, as he has been before, to the music of William Bolcom. "When you're starting your career as a choreographer," said Stowell, "new music always interests you; you want to be part of the new generation of artists. I heard some of Bolcom's music in the early 1980s, discovered that he was from the Pacific Northwest, and struck up a friendship with him. We've been working together for decades now. I've made five ballets to his music."

A Pulitzer Prize winning composer of chamber music, song cycles, operas and symphonies, Bolcom has also recorded twenty albums of show tunes and popular songs from the early 20th Century. He often incorporates elements of ragtime and jazz into his music, as he did in the piano pieces that accompany *Eden's Gates*. "A lot of his work deals with Americana, the ethnicity and diversity of our country in terms of musical heritage," Stowell said. "That's what I identify with most." Bolcom's duo-piano pieces, with names like "The Serpent's Kiss" and "Graceful Ghost Rag," set dynamic ground for a ballet that recalls a fast-paced vaudeville show. Yet this choreography digs deeply into contemporary ballet territory as well, and could not be danced without classical training. "The music and the choreography are both a bit quirky, a little off kilter to add an interesting flavor," said Stowell. "Ultimately, I want the audience to have a great time."

Kent Stowell was Artistic Director and Principal Choreographer of Pacific Northwest Ballet from 1977 until his retirement in June, 2005. He trained at the University of Utah, and danced with San Francisco Ballet, New York City Ballet and Munich Opera Ballet, where he also choreographed. In 1973, Mr. Stowell was appointed Ballet Master and Choreographer of Frankfurt Ballet and was named, with Francia Russell, Co-Artistic Director of the company in 1975. In 1977, Stowell and Russell were appointed Artistic Directors of Pacific Northwest Ballet. In addition to creating 30 repertory works for PNB, Stowell choreographed seven full-length ballets, more than any other American artistic director of a major ballet company.

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***Just* (2005)**

Music: Henry Cowell – *Set of Five, for violin, piano and percussion, HC 779*

Choreography: Trey McIntyre

Costume Design: Patrick Long

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Piano: Carol Rich

Violin: Lorely Zgonc

Percussion: Gordon Rencher

Just is an emotionally intense ballet perfectly suited to the intimate setting of the Newmark Theatre. Typical of Trey McIntyre's artistic output, it is intricate and athletic, rooted in classical ballet technique but experimental in its movement vocabulary. Performed by two women and two men in costumes inspired by the ribbons of a pointe shoe, it debuted in 2005 before an overwhelmingly enthusiastic Keller Auditorium crowd. The Portland Tribune wrote of the occasion, "Trey McIntyre's stunning *Just* dazzled an opening night audience...Everything about the world premiere works brilliantly."

McIntyre created his ballet to the music of Henry Cowell, an American innovator who in the 1920s and 30s pioneered the use of the tone cluster and conceived the first electronic rhythm machine. McIntyre discovered the composer's *Set of Five* years ago but always felt he should wait until he was mature enough as a choreographer to do justice to its complexity.

In response to Cowell's score, McIntyre challenged himself "not to allow any sort of emotional narrative in this ballet, but instead to riff off of the multilayered music." Just as Henry Cowell extended musical composition in his era, classical dance is extended in McIntyre's contemporary imagination. While the usual aesthetic of ballet is to make extraordinary movement look easy, *Just* exposes, in McIntyre's words, "the push, the drive, the lurch for new ideas."

Trey McIntyre, an internationally renowned dancemaker, is the artistic director and choreographer of Trey McIntyre Project. He received his dance training at the North Carolina School of the Arts and the Houston Ballet Academy, where he also began his choreographic career. He joined Houston Ballet as a company artist in 1989, and was later appointed Choreographic Associate, a position he still holds today. He has served as resident choreographer for Oregon Ballet Theatre (1998-1999), Ballet Memphis (2000-present) and The Washington Ballet (2004-2007), and creates works for some of the world's most prominent companies including New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, Moscow Ballet Theatre and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. Mr. McIntyre is the recipient of many grants and awards, including two choreographic fellowships from the National Endowment for Arts and a Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography.

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Slaughter on Tenth Avenue (1968) – Company Premiere

Music: Richard Rodgers – from *On Your Toes*, orchestrated by Hershy Kay

Choreography: George Balanchine

Staging: Tamara Hadley

Scenic & Costume Design: Jay Deppenbrock

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

George Balanchine choreographed *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* in 1936 for the Rodgers and Hart Broadway musical *On Your Toes*. In 1968, he reworked the story-within-a-story and presented it as a freestanding ballet. “It will be old-new,” he wrote.

On Your Toes was a parody of several stereotypes of its era, including Broadway, the mob, and the overly-impressed-with-himself Russian ballet dancer. In 1968, dance writer Jack Anderson summarized the plot for *Dance Magazine*:

A jealous premier dancer hires a Gangster to kill a rival during the premiere of a new ballet. This ballet—*Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* itself—concerns the seedy types who patronize a strip joint . . . where brawls occur almost hourly and the bartenders complacently sweep the corpses out the door with a broom . . . One of the customers [the Hooper] falls in love with a Strip Tease Girl who meets him for an after-hours tryst. They are discovered by the Big Boss, who, enraged at the girl’s faithlessness, shoots her. The ‘corpse’ of the Strip Tease Girl manages to pass a note to the Hooper warning him of the real murder plot.

The police eventually arrive, but are they in time to save the day? No one knows for sure, but one thing’s certain: the ballet concludes with a rousing finale from all involved - including the corpses.

Guest artist **Sean McGrath** portrays *The Gangster* in OBT’s production of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. A writer and performer for **Oregon Public Broadcasting’s *Live Wire Radio***, McGrath previously appeared in the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre’s 2007 production of Christopher Stowell’s *Peter and the Wolf*.

Widely regarded as the foremost choreographer in 20th century ballet, **George Balanchine** (1904 – 1983) was born in St. Petersburg in 1904 and danced and choreographed in Europe until co-founding the School of American Ballet in New York in 1934. This eventually led to the formation of the prestigious New York City Ballet and the creation of hundreds of diverse works including *Jewels*, *Serenade*, *Concerto Barocco*, *Apollo*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* and *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*. Mr. Balanchine’s ballets have become a part of nearly every major company’s repertoire.

Oregon Ballet Theatre’s 2007 – 2008 Season

“The Germanic Lands”

October 13-20, 2007 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra

The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude (1996)—Franz Schubert/William Forsythe—**Company Premiere**

Almost Mozart (2006)—W.A. Mozart/James Kudelka

A Midsummer Night’s Dream (2007)—Felix Mendelssohn/Christopher Stowell—**World Premiere**

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“George Balanchine’s The Nutcracker™”

December 8-24, 2007 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra

“France”

February 23–March 1, 2008 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra

Zais (2002)—Jean-Philippe Rameau/Christopher Stowell—**Company Premiere**

Afternoon of a Faun (1953)—Claude Debussy/Jerome Robbins—**Company Premiere**

Pas de Deux Parisien (2008)—Léo Delibes/Christopher Stowell—**World Premiere**

Bolero (2008)—Maurice Ravel/Nicolo Fonte—**World Premiere**

“America”

April 18–27, 2008 • Newmark Theatre • Music: Ensembles

Through Eden’s Gates (2007)—William Bolcom/Kent Stowell

Just (2006)—Henry Cowell/Trey McIntyre

Slaughter on Tenth Avenue (1968)—Richard Rodgers/George Balanchine—**Company Premiere**

“Russia”

June 6–8, 2008 • Keller Auditorium • Music: Ensembles

Rubies (1967)—Igor Stravinsky/George Balanchine

Tolstoy’s Waltz (2008)—Various/Christopher Stowell—**World Premiere**

Raymonda (2008)—Alexander Glazounov/Yuri Possokhov, after Marius Petipa—**World Premiere**

COMPANY ROSTER

Principal Dancers

Jon Drake • Yuka Iino • Gavin Larsen • Kathi Martuza • Anne Mueller • Alison Roper • Artur Sultanov •
Ronnie Underwood

Soloists

Brennan Boyer • Ansa Deguchi • Daniela Deloe • Steven Houser • Ilir Shtylla

Company Artists

Candace Bouchard • Martina Chavez • Andrea Cooper • Jacqueline Damico • Damian Drake • Adrian Fry •
Olga Krochik • Mia Leimkuhler • Matthew Pippin • Grace Shibley • Brian Simcoe • Emily Tedesco •
Lucas Threefoot • Holly Tolbert • Javier Ubell

Apprentices

Michael Davis • Kate Kearney • Patrick Kilbane • Mackenzie Martin • Abby Relic

Founded in 1989, **OREGON BALLET THEATRE** is a not-for-profit, professional ballet company, with a school, based in Portland, Oregon. On July 1, 2003, **Christopher Stowell** became **OREGON BALLET THEATRE**’s artistic director and **Damara Bennett** joined OBT as school director. **OREGON BALLET THEATRE** offers the highest quality ballet, in a repertoire of classic and contemporary work, to the people of Oregon, the Pacific Northwest and the United States.

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